



## North Dakota Department of Health

### MAIL/PACKAGE BIOTERRORISM PREVENTION PROTOCOLS

#### General:

- ?? Every business and organization should assess and review their protocols for handling mail. Common sense and care should be used in inspecting and opening mail or packages.
- ?? Examine unopened envelopes for foreign bodies or powder.
- ?? Do not open letters with your hands: use a letter opener.
- ?? Open letters and packages with a minimum of movement to avoid spilling any contents.
- ?? Each organization should assess whether it is a possible target for criminal acts. Based on this assessment, you may wish to take additional precautions such as wearing gloves and restricting the opening of mail to a limited number of trained individuals.

#### Some characteristics of suspicious packages and letters include:

- ?? Any letter or package that has suspicious or threatening messages written on it
- ?? Letters with oily stains, discolorations or odor
- ?? Envelopes that are lopsided, rigid, bulky, discolored or have a strange odor
- ?? No return address
- ?? Unexpected envelopes from foreign countries
- ?? No postage or non-cancelled postage
- ?? Improper spelling of common names, places or titles
- ?? Excessive postage
- ?? Marked with restrictive endorsements, such as "Personal" or "Confidential"
- ?? Handwritten or poorly typed addresses
- ?? Incorrect titles or with title, but no name
- ?? Excessive weight
- ?? Protruding wires or aluminum foil
- ?? Excessive security material such as masking tape, string, etc.
- ?? Visual distractions
- ?? Ticking sound
- ?? Shows a city or state in the postmark that does not match the return address

## UNOPENED SUSPECT ENVELOPES/PACKAGES

- ?? **DO NOT SHAKE** or empty the contents of any suspicious envelope or package.
- ?? **DO NOT OPEN** the envelope or package.
- ?? **LEAVE** the envelope or package.
- ?? **EVACUATE** the room or immediate area. It is unlikely that the entire building needs to be evacuated.
- ?? **KEEP** others from entering.
- ?? **NOTIFY** your supervisor.
- ?? **NOTIFY LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT** authorities or call **911**.

## OPENED PACKAGES THAT CONTAIN SUSPICIOUS MATERIAL

### DO NOT PANIC

- ?? Anthrax organisms can cause skin infection, gastrointestinal infection or pulmonary infection. To do so, the organism must be rubbed into abraded skin, swallowed, or inhaled as a fine, aerosolized mist. It does not leap into one's body. Disease can be prevented after exposure to the anthrax spores by early treatment with the appropriate antibiotics. Anthrax is not spread from one person to another person.
- ?? For anthrax to be effective as a covert agent, it must be aerosolized into very small particles. This is difficult to do, and requires a great deal of technical skill and special equipment. If these small particles are inhaled, life-threatening lung infection can occur, but prompt recognition and treatment are effective.

### CONTAIN THE EXPOSURE

- ?? **LEAVE** the letter/package where it is and cover it. Do not clean powder or any other substance up.
- ?? **EVACUATE** the immediate area. It is unlikely that the entire building needs to be evacuated.
- ?? **CLOSE OFF** the room (doors and windows), do not allow anyone other than qualified emergency personnel to enter.
- ?? Do not touch your eyes, nose or any other part of your body.
- ?? **WASH** your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- ?? **NOTIFY SUPERVISOR** who should notify building maintenance to close down the heating/air conditioning/ventilation system.
- ?? **NOTIFY LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT** authorities or call **911**.
- ?? **SHOWER** with **soap and water** as soon as possible. *Do Not Use Bleach Or Other Disinfectant On Your Skin.*
- ?? Place clothes in a plastic bag, or some other container that can be sealed and keep until law enforcement or health officials provide further guidance.
- ?? Make a **LIST** of all people who were in the room or area when this suspicious letter or package was recognized. Give this list to both the local public health authorities and law enforcement officials for follow-up investigations and advice.

## GUIDANCE FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT/FIRE DEPARTMENT/HAZMAT <sup>☞</sup>

### UNOPENED PACKAGES THAT MAY CONTAIN SUSPICIOUS MATERIAL

- ?? Notify local public health unit
- ?? Conduct **RISK ASSESSMENT** of envelope/package for explosive or other risk
- ?? If envelope/package presents no explosive or other risk, utilize appropriate safety precautions including necessary personal protective equipment, open the package and examine the contents. (PPE should include rubber gloves and consideration of a particulate respirator or mask suitable for tuberculosis protection when opening the package<sup>☞ ☞</sup>.)
- ?? If no suspicious materials/substances are found, disposition appropriately.
- ?? If suspicious materials/substance are found:
  - ~~☞~~ Carefully place envelope/package in a plastic bag and seal it. Carefully place this object in another plastic bag for a double seal\*.
- ?? Contact the North Department of Health at 800-472-2180 for disposition consultation\*.

### OPENED PACKAGES THAT CONTAIN SUSPICIOUS MATERIAL

- ?? Notify local public health unit
- ?? Conduct **RISK ASSESSMENT** of area
- ?? If no other risk is evident, utilize appropriate personal protective equipment
  - ~~☞~~ PPE should include rubber gloves
  - ~~☞~~ A particulate respirator<sup>☞ ☞</sup> or mask suitable for tuberculosis protection should be considered when handling the object
  - ~~☞~~ Carefully place envelope/package in a plastic bag and seal it. Carefully place this object in another plastic bag for a double seal\*.
- ?? Contact North Department of Health at 800-472-2180 for disposition consultation.

<sup>☞</sup> Bioterrorism is a federal crime and the FBI has jurisdiction. However, the current FBI policy is that they will not respond until there is agent laboratory confirmation or other evidence of terrorism.

\*Biological Agent Transport Kits are available at North Dakota Highway Patrol District Offices. These kits include a hard plastic sealable pail for transport, instructions, disposable gloves, a small plastic pail, biohazard bags, a household bottle of bleach and chain of custody forms.

The North Dakota Highway Patrol will transport the object for testing to the North Dakota Public Health Laboratory upon approval of the North Dakota Department of Health.

If decontamination of the immediate area is necessary, it is recommended to use a 1:10 bleach/water dilution (1 part bleach/9 parts water). This is roughly equivalent to 2 cups of bleach/gallon of water.

<sup>☞ ☞</sup> Respirator examples include half-face N-95 or P-100 models. Individuals wearing respirators should be enrolled in a respirator protection program which should include medical certification, training and fit testing.

**For additional information or guidance call the North Dakota Department of Health at 800-472-2180.**